

Department of Correction Announces Mission Changes At Two Department of Correction Facilities; Enhancing Offender Reentry and Improving Facility Efficiency

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- J. David Donahue, Commissioner

Plainfield, IN (August 22) - The Indiana Department of Correction announced today its plans to change the missions and populations at the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional Facility and the Plainfield Juvenile Correctional Facility. These changes will improve the success of offender reentry, and provide for more efficient facility capacity management.

At the Indianapolis Juvenile Correctional facility, plans are underway to operate two co-located units; one for juvenile girls, the other for juvenile boys. The juvenile males sent to this facility will be from the Indianapolis area, and placing them in this unit will keep them closer to family, and the community services that will assist them upon release. These units will operate adjacent, but completely separate from one another. The male and female students will not interact. To insure that they remain separated, additional fencing, lighting, and cameras will be added to this unit.

Redirecting this population will also help the Department of Correction better manage its resources. During the last several years, the number of juveniles adjudicated delinquent and sent to the Department has decreased dramatically.

“Although it is a good sign that fewer Indiana kids are being sent to the Department of Correction,” explains Donahue “this trend has caused nearly a thousand empty beds within the Department's juvenile facilities.” The downward trend on the number of kids prompted the decision earlier this year to close two small juvenile facilities; one in Bloomington, the other if Fort Wayne. Fran Osburn, Superintendent of the Indianapolis Juvenile Facility, reports that “Every female juvenile sent to the Department currently resides at the Indianapolis Juvenile Facility, and yet that facility remains over half empty.” The decision to locate male juveniles here will allow this facility to operate more effectively and efficiently.

The Plainfield Juvenile Correctional Facility, will be renamed the “Plainfield Educational Reentry

Facility”, and will accommodate adult male offenders nearing the end of their period of incarceration and preparing for transition back into the Community. This will be the first state-run facility in Indiana devoted to assisting offenders with community reentry. Currently, 97% of adult offenders sent to the Department of Correction complete their fixed prison terms and are returned to the community. It is vital that the Department improve its transition programming, in order to increase the likelihood that offenders leaving the Department will not reengage in criminal behavior and return to prison. This reentry facility will assist offenders who were sentenced from central Indiana with finding approved permanent housing, with identifying employment opportunities, and with linking them up to the community resources they need, prior to their release from confinement. To assist in this effort, the Department of Correction, and the Plainfield Reentry Facility looks forward to building stronger relationships with community service providers, area employers, and volunteers dedicated to helping inmates acclimate back to their neighborhoods.

Recently, the Department started measuring the level of offender recidivism. “In the past, the Department has done a poor job assisting offenders with reentry,” says Commissioner J. David Donahue, who adds “no longer can we just escort them to the prison door and present them with a bus ticket and a check for \$75, with no legal ID to allow them to cash it, and expect them to succeed.” Donahue went on to report that at least 37.7% of offenders released will return to prison within three years. “If this reentry program can reduce the number returning to prison by just 5%, it could prevent hundreds of serious crimes from being committed, and save taxpayers millions of dollars each year.” says Donahue.

While the juvenile offender population is on the decline, the number of adult offenders sent to the Department of Correction continues to rise. A snapshot of the population taken at the end of this fiscal year shows 22,370 adult offenders. This number is forecasted to rise to a level of 26,785, by 2010. The decision to transform the Plainfield facility to an adult reentry facility will not only afford much needed transition programs to offenders, it will help the Department accommodate this forecasted increase in adult population.